



PRADHAN MANTRI UCHCHATAR SHIKSHA ABHIYAN (PM-USHA) - WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE CONCERN RAISED BY THE STATES.

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ABSTRACT

PM-Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA) is an ambitious scheme of the Government of India. The Government of India has started this scheme through the Ministry of Education. The objective of this scheme, which has far-reaching goals in higher education, is to provide easy access to the common people by improving the quality of the current education system. This is the reason that for this complex work, the Central Government has made a provision to establish coordination with the states in this scheme and to increase the quality of education, state universities and its affiliated colleges have also been included in this ambitious scheme. In view of the provisions and criteria set for financial assistance for higher education in this scheme, some states have registered their objections and have requested the Central Government to make desired changes or improvements in these provisions. Some state governments say that all the provisions of revenue allocation prescribed in the Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan are meant to implement the National Education Policy 2020 through the back door. All these state governments say that the central government should give up its vested interests and work with the state governments to bring uniformity in its criteria for this ambitious scheme. Apart from this, some relaxation should also be adopted in the rules related to revenue borne by the states. The success of any scheme depends on better coordination between the central and state governments and the feeling of keeping each other's rights intact. Personal selfishness and political malice distort the basic spirit of this scheme, as a result of which the scheme is unable to achieve its basic objectives. Therefore, the Central and State Governments should pave the way for the success of this scheme by ending mutual ideological differences and bringing desired reforms.

KEYWORDS: PM-Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, Pm-Usha, Higher Education Improvement, Government Policies, Revenue Allocation, Mutual Ideological Differences

BACKGROUND

It is a central education scheme sponsored by the Government of India, being implemented through the Ministry of Education (Government of India). This ambitious scheme aims to work with the State Universities and their affiliated colleges in a dedicated manner to enhance the quality and effectiveness of education through significant changes / provisions in the higher education system.

Rashtriya Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan, launched in 2013, was an important initiative of the Central Government to fund educational institutions in various States and Union Territories for educational upgradation. The scheme was launched with the specific concept of achieving easy access, uniformity and excellence in the higher education systems of different States with efficiency, transparency and accountability in the teaching learning process. The first phase of this ambitious scheme was launched in 2013. In view of the success of the first phase, the second phase of this education scheme was launched in 2018 with the same concept to eliminate the problems related to financial management in the higher education system.

At present, keeping in view the new challenges and possibilities of the educational environment and with special reference to the new National Education Policy 2020, the RUSA scheme has been launched as Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA).

Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan will focus on the following facts

Equity, Access and Inclusion: Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Yojana aims to integrate economically and socially disadvantaged groups into the mainstream of society by

providing them adequate opportunities and academic support and also focuses on gender inclusion in the education system. This ambitious scheme emphasizes the inclusion of women, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and especially students with disabilities in the higher education system.

Developing quality teaching-learning processes: The scheme encompasses the objectives of further upgrading the infrastructure of higher education institutions and converting single-stream higher education institutions (HEIs) into institutions that provide multidimensional education.

Ensuring Accreditation of Unrecognized Institutions and Improving the Accreditation Process: The accreditation process motivates and guides higher education institutions to meet and maintain high standards in education, thereby improving the perception of higher education institutions among the general public. The level of trust increases and accountability of higher education institutions is also fixed.

Information Technology based Digital Infrastructure: Educational technology has a major role in ensuring greater access to education for common people, removing linguistic barriers between teachers and students, popularizing language acquisition as well as introducing open distance learning programmes.

Skill development through creativity: The correlation between technical training and academia is the key to motivating innovation and skill development. The Prime Minister will encourage Higher Education Campaign, skill development,

innovation and strengthening employability.

Objectives of P.M.Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan

The underlying spirit of Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan is that there should be a proper system of educational management and administration in higher education, as well as the process of financial management and financial allocation should be established in accordance with transparent norms. The major objectives of this ambitious scheme are as follows: -

1. To enhance the quality of education by properly implementing the pre-determined norms and standards of education so as to enable the desired improvement in the overall quality of existing higher education institutions.
2. Implementing the suggestions of the National Education Policy-2020 through proper financial management in public educational institutions.
3. Establish a process of administrative and academic reform in state universities, in addition to establishing correlations with school education and the labour market.
4. Create conditions so that scientific temper is developed in colleges and students are able to focus on educational innovation.
5. Inequalities prevalent in urban and rural areas in terms of opportunities to pursue higher education will be corrected.
6. To improve employability of students by developing their skills and professional aptitude.

Concerns raised by States on various subjects

After a superficial look at the Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan, it can be concluded that various States and Union Territories have been forced to follow such academic norms for receiving financial assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA), which have been established without adequate consultation between the States and the Central Government.

Guidelines for the scheme: A specific version of Rashtriya Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA) - to ensure uniformity and excellence in the higher education system in each State with Central financial assistance - was released in June 2020. Only 22 states and Union Territories joined the PM-USHA, which requires the signing of an MoU between the state and the Department of Higher Education (MoE).

The states of *Tamil Nadu*, *West Bengal* and *Kerala* are among the 14 states and union territories that have refused to join the scheme. The National Education Policy 2020, in addition to the MoU for availing financial assistance under the Pradhan Mantri Uchchar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA), also includes the commitment of the States to implement the guidelines for the National Credit Framework for the four-year undergraduate course. Without agreeing to the above provisions, the States cannot avail their share in the Economic Support Fund, a revenue of about ₹12,926.10 crore in the session 2023-24 and 2024-25, earmarked for improving / modifying the higher education system run by the States. In this economic system, 40% of the funds are to be borne by the respective state governments.

For quite some time, many states have opposed the National Education Policy-2020 in both phases i. e. draft and implementation etc. Many States like Tamil Nadu have also initiated efforts to draft their State Education Policy. In addition, there is a demand to return 'education' from the concurrent list to

the state list, where it was transferred without debate and discussion during the Emergency during the Congress government.

In the current political scenario, some states are of the view that the conditions laid down for PM-USHA and other norms are designed to implement the National Education Policy-2020 through the back door. The proposed National Scheme for Higher Education needs to establish uniformity in its terms and standards in consultation with various States so as to effectively address the concerns of the State Governments. The overemphasis on the four-year undergraduate programme has also led to concerns whether students with social / economic disabilities will be able to devote money and time for another additional year of study in colleges for four-year undergraduate courses. Will they get any help from the government? Apart from these questions, Meghalaya, a state that has supported the National Education Policy-2020, has also called for a re-look at the revenue allocation norms. Keeping in view all these educational and political circumstances, the Ministry of Education should establish better coordination with various dissenting States, respecting the principle of collective responsibility and the inherent spirit of cooperative federalism. Further, it would be prudent to discuss the terms and criteria of revenue allocation in the scheme, irrespective of political dogmas.

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